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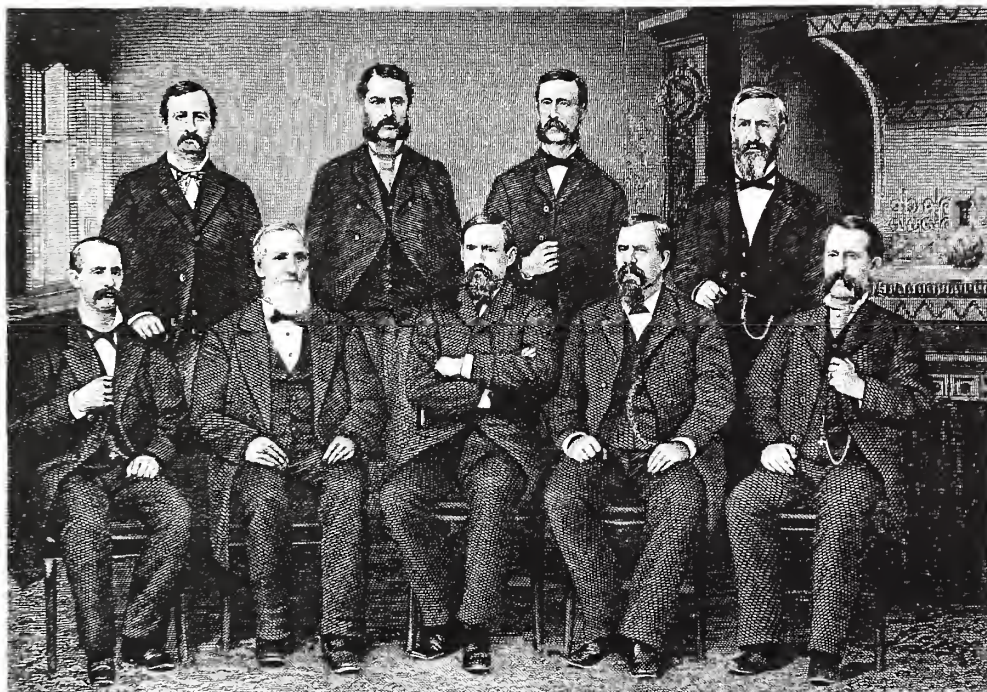
The Assassination of Abraham Lincoln

Lincoln Guard of Honor

Excerpts from newspapers and other
sources

From the files of the
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in the "Massensation" folder*



J. M. NEILL N. B. WIGGINS E. S. JOHNSON C. L. CONKLING HORACE CHAPIN J. P. LINDLEY
Treasurer *Secretary* *President* *Vice President*

THE LINCOLN GUARD OF HONOR.

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, FEBRUARY 12TH 1899

IN MEMORY OF THE MARTYR

Exercises Commemorative of the Death of
Abraham Lincoln.

Description of the Labor of the Guards
of Honor in Protecting the Presi-
dent's Remains From
Vandal Hands.

1887
SPRINGFIELD, Ill., April 15.—The twenty-second anniversary of the death of Abraham Lincoln was commemorated in the hall of representatives this afternoon, the service being under the direction of the Lincoln guard of honor. The exercises continued over two hours and were largely attended. Addresses were delivered by Bishop Seymour, of the Springfield diocese, and Hon. W. H. Colling, member of the house of representatives. Clinton L. Conklin, a member of the Lincoln guard, read the historical paper descriptive of the labor of the guards in guarding the remains of the martyred president against vandal hordes. After the memorable journey from Washington City to Springfield, the body of President Lincoln was deposited in the receiving vault in Oak Ridge cemetery on Thursday, May 4, 1865. One week from that day the National Lincoln Monument association was organized. Their first work was to build a temporary vault on the ground secured for the monument. To this vault the body was removed on December 21, 1865, and there remained till September 19, 1871, when it was placed in the monument. Upon each occasion the remains were identified by a member of the monument association. Afterwards, on the 9th of October, 1874, the remains were transferred to the marble sarcophagus in the catacomb and were again identified. Here the body remained undisturbed till the night of November 7, 1876, when an attempt was made to steal the coffin with its contents. The thieves succeeded in breaking open the sarcophagus and in partially removing the coffin, but being disturbed in their work the attempt failed and the remains were restored to their former resting place. Members of the monument association, feeling the insecurity of the situation, and fearing a renewal of the attempt to carry away the remains, caused them to be removed from the sarcophagus, and, on the evening of November 15, 1876, the three members of the executive committee of the association, with some additional assistance, secretly conveyed the casket into one of the inner recesses of the monument. No further steps were taken until November, 1888, when public attention was aroused by events occurring in New York city. The members of the monument association, being personally unable to undertake the work required to be done, left the entire matter in the hands of John T. Stuart, chairman of the executive committee. He requested John T. Bower, custodian of the monument, to select several persons whom he could trust and with their assistance to place the body of the president where it would be secure. He selected Gustavus S. Dana, Jasper N. Reece, Joseph P. Lindley, Edward S. Johnson and James McNeill. On the night of November 18, 1878, these gentlemen removed the remains to a more remote recess beneath the monument, to a place immediately south of the present crypt, and there buried them. Every possible precaution was taken to remove all traces of the work or indications of the place of burial, which was deemed the more necessary because of intimations received about this time that another attempt would be made to steal the body. This place was known only to those taking part in the transaction and to those officers of the monument association by whose request it had been done. In order to more fully carry out the wishes of the executive committee of the monument association, as expressed by Hon. John Stuart, its chairman, and to provide for the continued safety of the remains, the gentlemen above named, together with Noble B. Wiggius, Horace Chapin and Clinton L. Conklin, on February 12, 1886, formed an association under the laws of the state of Illinois, the corporate name being the "Lincoln Guard of Honor." The ostensible object of this association was to hold memorial services upon the anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's death. Its real

object was to keep secret his place of burial and to protect his remains from desecration. Thus the Lincoln Guard of Honor became the immediate guardian of the dust of Abraham Lincoln. This trust they continued to hold until April 14, 1887, when the coffin of the martyr president was raised from its resting place and formally transferred by the Lincoln Guard of Honor to the Lincoln monument association. By direction of the latter association the casket was opened and the face exposed to view. The familiar features were recognized by those present. The casket was again sealed up and removed to the vault recently prepared beneath the center of the marble floor of the catacomb in the Lincoln monument. By his side were deposited the remains of his wife. Over and around both caskets is a solid mass of masonry and concrete. The following certificate attests the identity of the body and the last act in this history:

We, the undersigned members of the Lincoln Monument association, of Springfield, Illinois, do hereby certify that on the 14th day of April, 1887, we saw the cedar and lead coffin which contain the remains of Abraham Lincoln opened in our presence in the memorial hall of the monument. The remains were somewhat shrunken, but the features were quite natural and we could readily recognize them as the features of the former illustrious president of our nation and that they are his remains, and that they were again resealed in his said coffin and deposited in the vault beneath the floor of the catacomb in our presence. (Signed)

James C. Conkling, George N. Black, Lincoln Dubois, Ozias N. Hatch, John W. Burr, Christopher C. Brown.

Dated this 14th day of April, 1887.

In their last resting place, secure from all sacrilege, to-day lie the remains of Abraham Lincoln, who died "With malice toward none, with charity for all."

He Was a Member of the Guard of Honor Over the Remains of President Lincoln, He Writes. 3-13-21

Sedalia, Mo.—*To The Star*: A recent article in *The Star* told of the death of the "last surviving member of the guard of honor over the remains of President Lincoln." I desire to state that I was a member of that honor guard and had command of a company in the funeral procession.

Fourteen officers who composed the guard were:

Lieut. Col. Martin Flood, 15th regiment, V. R. C., Com.
Capt. R. C. Phetteplace, 8th regiment, V. R. C., Com.
Capt. Samuel C. Gold, 15th regiment, V. R. C., Com.
Capt. Jerry M. Hill, 15th regiment, V. R. C., Com.
Capt. Edward Miller, 15th regiment, V. R. C., Com.
Capt. J. L. Hill, 24th Ohio battery.
First Lieut. Nathan Cole, 13th regiment, V. R. C.
First Lieut. F. R. Garrety, 15th regiment, V. R. C.
First Lieut. J. W. Crawford, 8th regiment, V. R. C.
Second Lieut. J. B. Taylor, adjutant, 15th regiment, V. R. C.
Second Lieut. S. McDonald, 15th regiment, V. R. C.
Second Lieut. L. M. Wood, 8th regiment, V. R. C.
Second Lieut. W. L. McDaniel, 15th regiment, V. R. C.
Second Lieut. L. W. Groebeck, 15th regiment, V. R. C.

I entered the service as a private in company C, 13th regiment, O. V. I., October 14, 1861. I became second lieutenant November 8, 1861, and first lieutenant May 31, 1862, following the battle of Shiloh. I was wounded in the left hip in the battle of Stone River December 31, 1862, and promoted to captain the next day. All three commissions were signed by Governor Todd of Ohio.

I was discharged from the 13th regiment, O. V. I., September 3, 1863, because of my wound, and October 15 was commissioned captain in the regular army by President Lincoln. I served until October, 1868.

Except for the wound I had perfect health all that time. I have not been under the care of a doctor since the war. Now, 81 years old, standing on my right leg, I am six feet two inches tall. My left leg has shortened gradually in the last twenty years on account of my wound and I am forced to walk with a cane.

I would be pleased to hear from any other member of the old guard, if there is any surviving. SAMUEL C. GOLD.

Son of Lincoln Guard



HORACE LELAND WIGGINS

Managing director of Benjamin Franklin Hotel, at the age of 6, wearing a duplicate of the uniform of his father, Colonel Noble B. Wiggins, who was a member of the Lincoln Guard of Honor. Colonel Wiggins and eight others concealed the body of Abraham Lincoln for nearly twenty years

PHIL. PUBLIC LEDGER

LAST TO SEE LINCOLN'S REMAINS

Col. James F. McNeill Tells the Details of the Secret Burial of Martyred President.

The Oskaloosa Rotary Club, at the meeting and luncheon Tuesday noon had the pleasure of listening to a splendid talk by Col. James F. McNeill. Mr. McNeill is the only surviving member of the Lincoln Guard of Honor. *OSKALOOSA TOWNSHIP*

It will be recalled that in 1876 an attempt was made to plunder the last resting place of Abraham Lincoln, the martyred president. The idea was to steal the remains and then demand a ransom. The plot originated in Chicago, but the chief of police was secretly informed of the plot—in fact, had one of his men with two conspirators who proposed to carry out the job. The chief and a detail of police were stationed nearby on the night the plot was to be carried out, and when the conspirators had started to work they made a rush, but one of the police accidentally discharged his revolver and the men got away in the dark. However, they were captured in Chicago a few days later and served a short term in prison. *Times & Globe*

It seemed that when the trial came on that there was no law covering just such a case and that was the reason for the small penalty.

After this attempt to steal the body of the president, the Lincoln Guard of Honor was formed, and the remains were secretly buried, until such a time as it was seen fit to remove them to their final resting place.

The Guard of Honor, in order to be sure that the remains were those of President Lincoln, opened the casket so that Col. McNeill is now the last man who looked upon the form of the martyr in death. *7 24 22*

It was a most interesting recital of the inside facts of the case, and the regrets of many were that Mr. McNeill could not have had more time to go more extendedly into the details of the case.

After Col. McNeill talked the meeting was then turned into a quiz and each member was asked to name the capital of the various states. It showed that the boys were fairly well up on the subject.

THE LINCOLN GUARD

COLONEL McNEILL IS ONLY SURVIVING MEMBER.

OSKALOOSA TOWNSHIP
Col. J. F. McNeill, the only surviving member of the "Lincoln Guard of Honor," gave a most interesting talk before the Rotary Club yesterday afternoon, discussing his connection with that memorable organization. There were seven of the Guard who were entrusted with the remains of the martyred President after several attempts had been made by vandals to rob the tomb and hold the body for ransom. Only these seven men knew exactly where the casket rested for many years, until fear of theft has disappeared. It was also interesting to hear of the journey of the funeral train from Washington to the President's old home in Springfield, Illinois, being 12 days on the way, and of the honors paid the distinguished and beloved dead. For many years after the death of the President the Lincoln Guard of Honor held memorial services each year on the anniversary of the death, starting the exercises at the exact hour in the morning when the President had died. Col. McNeill is the only member of the famous guard now among the living and his reminiscences of those stirring times were a revelation in all. It was a talk of unusual interest. *HERALD*

Testing the memory of members of the club, President Pro Tem E. L. Butler, called a roll of the 48 states and asked members to name the capitals. Aside from Art Oppenheimer placing Baton Rouge in Alabama, Rev. Stranahan guessing that Richmond was in Georgia, and a few other like mistakes the members got along fairly well in the contest. *7 18 1922*

Member of Famous Guard.

OSKALOOSA, Ia., Feb. 11.—Special: Colonel Jas. F. McNeill of this city is a member of the famous "Lincoln Guard of Honor" and will have a part in the national memorial exercises to be held at the Lincoln tomb in Springfield, Ill. There were only nine members of this famous organization and for nine years they were the only persons who knew where the body of the martyred president rested. The remains were buried six different times before they were placed in their final resting place, in the foundation of the Lincoln memorial at Springfield. They were first placed in a vault in the Springfield grave yard, and then transferred to the private burying grounds. Shortly after memorial was started they were removed there for safe keeping and were hidden among the stones and timbers. They were finally placed in the niche in the monument and here they rested for some time. A bold attempt, and one that came near being successful, to steal the remains, called for the organization of the Lincoln Guard of Honor. The members were chosen from resident soldiers and near friends of Lincoln living at Springfield, by the National Memorial association and by members of the president's family. These nine men in 1878 went to the monument and in the dead of night took the body from its resting place and buried it in an excavation under the monument. Here it rested for nine years or until 1887, when it was officially turned over to the association. It and the body of Mrs. Lincoln who had died in the interim, were then deposited in the tomb in the base of the monument, and encased in a cement vault, the walls of which are practically indestructible. Colonel McNeill saw four years of service in the army and was breveted for bravery. He was a personal friend of the president's and enjoyed his friendship and treasures his recollection. *OSKALOOSA REGISTER*

OSKALOOSA DAILY HERALD

MONDAY, MAY 28, 1923 *loosa*

Col. J. F. McNeill, responsive to special invitation went to Central university at Pella last week to talk at Chapel assembly and tell the students about President Abraham Lincoln and the special Guard of honor of which the Colonel is today the only surviving member. The story of the attempt to steal the body of the martyred president and of the precautions taken by the guard to circumvent the plots is one of absorbing interest and the speaker held the closest attention throughout the address. William Shaw and A. H. Rodgers accompanied Mr. McNeill to the college and the old soldiers were given a hearty welcome and reception. Larkin Martin, grandson of the colonel was also a member of the party.

J WRIGHT

COL. J. F. McNEILL, OF OSKALOOSA, ONLY MEMBER OF LINCOLN GUARD OF HONOR ALIVE.

The return of Memorial Day recalls an incident in the life of Col. J. F. McNeill of this city, which will bear repetition often.

Eleven years after the assassination of beloved Abraham Lincoln, a company of ghouls at Chicago entered into a plot to steal the body of the martyred president and hold it for ransom.

Few now remember the story and few know how the fiendish plot was thwarted, and how the sacred remains of Abraham Lincoln were hidden and for two years rested beneath a pile of rubbish, and later were buried in a hidden corner of the Lincoln monument at Springfield.

Col. McNeill was one of the Lincoln Guard of Honor upon whom fell the sacred trust of secretly interring the remains of the martyred president. Col. McNeill's story was published for the first time on the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Abraham Lincoln, in 1915.

Tells of Assassination.

In his article Col. McNeill tells of the assassination of President Lincoln in Ford's theatre at Washington, death from the shot fired by John Wilkes Booth, an actor, resulting at twenty-two minutes past 7 o'clock, April 15, 1865. He tells of the funeral procession, which called forth crowds of sympathizers along the line of itinerary from Washington to Springfield, where interment was made, such as had never before been equalled in the history of like events, and which have had no parallel since.

"The procession reached Springfield on the morning of May 3," Col. McNeill writes, "and on the following morning the remains were deposited in the receiving vault of Oak Ridge cemetery, and on December of the same year (1865), they were placed in the temporary vault erected on the grounds of the National Lincoln Monument association, where they remained until the catacomb of the monument was in condition to receive them. On September 17, 1871, they were placed therein, and three years later were enclosed in a marble sarcophagus resting on the floor of the catacomb."

"In the fall of 1876 the custodian, Dr. John Carroll Power, was informed of the existence of a plot to steal the remains of the president, the plotters having a double object in view, first, to exact a heavy ransom for the return of the body, and second, to obtain the release of a celebrated expert counterfeiter, a member of their gang, then in prison.

Detectives Get Plans.

"The services of Elmer Washburn, Mr. Tyrell and other distinguished detectives of Chicago were obtained and through their efforts it was learned when the attempt would be made, it being the night of the presidential election day, when it was presumed that the attention of all would be engrossed with that exciting event, and the chances for interruption to their plans that much less.

"Soon after dark on that evening,

November 7, 1876, Dr. Power and the detectives secreted themselves in memorial hall of the monument, separated from the catacomb on the opposite side by a stone partition wall, and waiting until they heard the men at work, ran out of the hall and around the monument, guns in hand, hoping to catch the miscreants red handed. But a conveniently stationed sentinel gave the alarm and in the darkness they all escaped. Some three weeks later, however, they were all arrested at Chicago, but as 'no law could' be found in Illinois punishing this particular offense, they were tried on some lighter charge and received sentence of one year's imprisonment in the state penitentiary.

"It was found that the sarcophagus had been opened by the ghouls and the coffin drawn part way out. Aware of the great danger of leaving the remains in such an insecure position, a few nights later Dr. Power and some resident members of the monument association took the coffin from the sarcophagus, sealed it up carefully, moved the remains around the monument to and through memorial hall, and placed the coffin on some jutting foundation walls.

Act Stirs Association.

"They were old gentlemen and, fatigued with the work, they covered the coffin with some loose boards, intending later to return and safely secrete the body, but, strange to believe, the remains of Abraham Lincoln were permitted to occupy this unprotected and undignified locality for more than two years, about which time the successful attempt to steal the remains of A. T. Stewart aroused the Monument association to action, and they authorized Dr. Power to secure such assistance as he might deem best, take full charge of the remains, and bury them in some secret and secure resting place beyond the possibility of future desecration.

"Thus authorized, Dr. Power chose five of his acquaintances in whose honor and discretion he felt he might safely rely, and on the night of November 18, 1878, we met at the monument where the situation was explained to us, and we accepted what to each of us appeared to be a sacred and patriotic trust.

"The body of the president was enclosed in three coffins, of cedar, lead and pine, which we lowered to the dirt floor of the excavation for the monument and buried in an obscure locality between some partition walls of the foundation, strewing the place with dirt and fragments of brick and stone to obliterate any evidence of recent disturbance.

"Unaccustomed as we all were to much physical labor, in cramped quarters, with no labor helping appliances, in a confined underground atmosphere, and by the light of a small lamp, the completion of this task occupied the entire night and called for all the strength each possessed.

Form Guard of Honor.

"Associating with us three other friends, on the twelfth day of February, 1880, we organized The Lincoln Guard of Honor, incorporating it under the laws of Illinois in perpetual organ-

ization, the two main objects as expressed in the articles being: First, to guard and protect the sacred remains and do honor to the memory of Abraham Lincoln; second, to purchase the Lincoln homestead at Springfield, Illinois, fill it with mementos of Mr. Lincoln's domestic and official life and keep it open under proper restrictions for the inspection of home and visiting friends. As Robert T. Lincoln declined to part with this property, that part of our plan was necessarily abandoned.

"On April 18, 1880, the first memorial exercises were held at the monument under the direction of The Lincoln Guard of Honor, commencing at twenty-two minutes past 7 o'clock in the morning, corresponding to the exact time of Mr. Lincoln's death. These exercises were held annually for a period of years, consisting of an address by some speaker of national reputation, the reading of extracts from the letters and papers of Mr. Lincoln, and appropriate music.

"Mrs. Lincoln, the widow of the president, died in July, 1882, and her remains were deposited in the crypt next to the one that had contained the body of her husband, and at the request of her son, Robert T. Lincoln, The Lincoln Guard of Honor met at the monument the second night after the funeral, took the remains from the catacomb and buried them by the side of her husband. There they were permitted to rest until April 14, 1892, twenty-two years after the date of President Lincoln's assassination, when our organization, believing we had faithfully executed the solemn trust voluntarily assumed, in guarding the bodies, brought them back to the catacomb, and turned them over to the surviving members of the Monument association.

"After the remains of the president had been identified, the two bodies were buried in a pit dug through the floor of the catacomb, long enough, wide enough, and deep enough to permit their being covered with heavy courses of concrete, making their tomb practically a solid rock, where the public mind may rest in the conviction of the absolute impossibility of future disturbance."

The members of the Lincoln Guard of Honor were: G. S. Dana, president; J. N. Reese, vice president; John Carroll Power, secretary; J. F. McNeill, treasurer; E. S. Johnson, Clinton L. Conkling, Joseph P. Lindrey, Horace Chapin and N. P. Wiggins.

The last two remaining members, with the exception of Colonel McNeill, died seven years ago, Hon. Clinton L. Conkling and Major E. S. Johnson of Springfield. Colonel McNeill is the only surviving member of that loyal body of men organized for the purpose of protecting the body of and honoring the name of Abraham Lincoln.

Oskaloosa (Iowa) 1122
May 30 1922

J. W. L. G. H.

THE LINCOLN GUARD OF HONOR IS RECALLED

Col. J. F. McNeill, Last Surviving Member, Tells Experiences of that Stirring Night

Col. J. F. McNeill, sole surviving member of the "Lincoln Guard of Honor," spoke before the high school Tuesday afternoon and in the evening he addressed the Spanish American war veterans. To these he told the story of the attempt to steal the body of the great war president, and the formation of the "Guard of Honor." Here is the Colonel's address as delivered on this occasion:

The Colonel's Address.

The attempt to steal the remains of Abraham Lincoln from the monument at Oak Ridge cemetery near Springfield, Ill., about which I have been requested to talk for a few minutes, occasioned the greatest excitement at the time, even arousing international interest, yet we all appreciate that events are viewed differently—I might say indifferently, through the space of many years, and it would not be surprising if many present had never heard, or at least were without present recollection of such an occurrence.

The funeral train or procession left Washington for Springfield, Ill., on April 21st. (In point of unusual sympathy evoked, and of the multitudes that participated in the various demonstrations, was without parallel in the history of life events). Numerous stops were made enroute at principal cities, the remains were transferred to a hearse, conveyed to a church or hall or park and appropriate services held, and at stations where it was known that no stop would be made, crowds were assembled, without regard to the hour or weather conditions, and occasionally informal ceremonies were held such as a chorus of school children or instrumental music as the train pulled slowly through.

The train arrived at Springfield on May 3rd, traveling nearly 1700 miles through a period of twelve days. The remains were taken to the State Capitol building, placed in state in the hall of representatives, and after the doors were opened for 24 hours a continuous stream of visitors, strangers, acquaintances, neighbors and friends filed past.

Mr. Lincoln had never visited his home city from the morning he left on February 11th, 1861, and few of the crowd that gathered at the sta-

tion to bid him good-bye ever looked upon that rugged, kindly face again until opportunity was offered upon this occasion. The following morning the remains were placed in the receiving vault of the cemetery association and here the principal funeral services were observed, Bishop Simpson, of the Methodist Episcopal church, officiating. The crowds in attendance overflowed the city, and when the head of the funeral procession reached the cemetery the rear had not left the capitol building, a mile and a half away.

President Lincoln was assassinated on the night of April 14th, 1865, at Ford's Theater, Washington, D. C., and passed away on the following morning, his death being the result of the cowardly pistol shot fired from behind by John Wilkes Booth. The funeral services, held at the National Capitol, were of the most impressive character, attended by the leading citizens of this and many foreign countries.

Those who have seen the monument will recall that it faces both south and north. In the south front facing the city is located Memorial Hall, containing a large collection of data relating to Mr. Lincoln's administration. Over the door of the hall stands the bronze statue of Mr. Lincoln, ten feet in height, looking towards the city, where he lived from 1837 to 1861. On the opposite side of the monument is the catacomb, or large receiving vault with crypts built to receive the remains of the Lincoln family.

In the summer of 1876, the Custodian of the monument, Dr. John Carroll Power, received information that a small group was forming in Chicago with the object of stealing the President's remains and holding them for ransom. He communicated with Mr. Elmer Washburn, Chicago chief of police, who detailed a detective to hunt up the squad and join them, which he did, with the result that the chief was kept informed of what was going on and he in turn kept Dr. Power posted. The conspirators selected the night of November 7th of that year, being the night of a presidential election day, to make the attempt. Chief Washburn and some detectives came down from Chicago, met Dr. Power, and together went to the monument shortly after dark, se-

creting themselves in Memorial Hall. Later on it became evident that the robbers had arrived and were at work. After waiting a sufficient length of time, Mr. Washburn and his force left the hall, ran around the monument, hoping to catch the robbers red-handed at their work, but

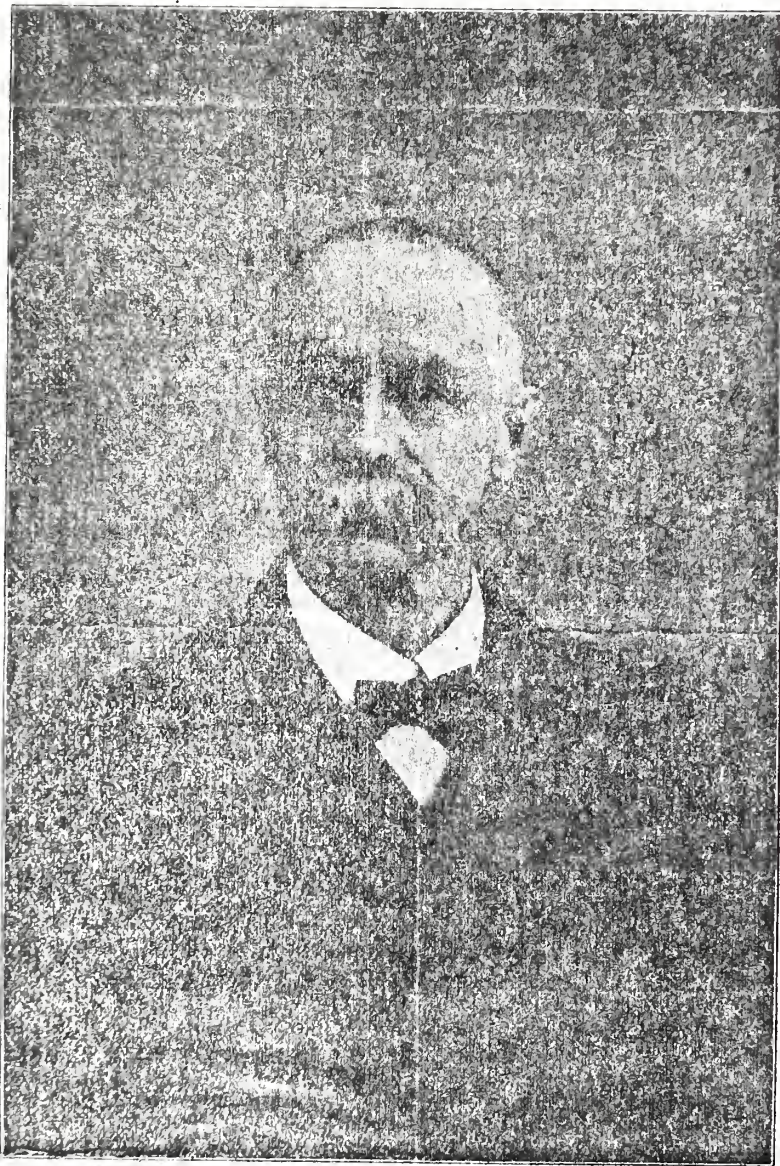
one of the number over nervous or awkward discharged his revolver, alarming the men at work in the vault, who in the darkness and confusion escaped. A number of revolver shots were exchanged but no one was injured. These men were arrested, however, ten days later in Chicago, were brought to trial and received a sentence of one year in the penitentiary.

Previous to this a large marble sarcophagus was built and placed on the floor of the catacomb directly opposite the iron rod door through which visitors could easily see the interior of the vault, the casket of the president taken from crypt No. 1 and placed in this receptacle, and on investigation it was found that the end of the sarcophagus had been pried off and the coffin drawn partly out when the robbers were interrupted. A night or two afterwards some members of the monument association and Dr. Power removed the casket from the catacomb, conveyed it around the monument to and through Memorial Hall, intending to give some secret burial, but the task proved more arduous than they had anticipated and the coffin was placed on some projecting foundation walls and covered with loose boards, they intending to return later and finish their work, and incredible as it may appear the body of our great president was permitted to remain in that insecure and undignified situation for nearly two years, about which time the remains of A. T. Stewart, former merchant prince of New York City, was stolen from his place of burial, a large ransom paid the robbers, the body was returned, and as I recall no questions asked. This badly frightened the Association people anew, and they directed Dr. Power to call to his aid such assistance as he might consider necessary, take charge of the situation and give the president's remains secure and secret burial. The Doctor selected five others, myself among the number, called us to meet at the monument one night, explained the situation and told us what he had marked out for us to do. One remark in his little talk I still remember, to the effect that he had spent some time trying to think up some form of iron clad oath or obligation that would bind us to secrecy, finally concluding that no obligation was more binding between men of honor than their word of honor, which was given and was sufficient. Omitting details, we lowered the casket to the ground floor of the excavation for the foundation walls, and in a room that looked like it might have been arranged for the purpose, composed only of some rising walls supporting different parts

of the superstructure we buried it. Mr. Robert T. Lincoln and the executive committee of the association knew what was being done, we six only knew the exact locality. We added three friends to our number and organized the Lincoln Guard of Honor. Here I might mention that in July, 1882, the widow of President Lincoln passed away and at the funeral her remains were placed in a crypt in the catacomb and Robert Lincoln, who came to Springfield, to the funeral, requested that the Lincoln Guard would bury the remains of his mother by the side of his father, and the night after the funeral we complied with his request. The Guard of Honor was incorporated under the laws of Illinois, in perpetual organization, meaning that the corporation exists as long as an incorporator is living, and of those nine friends, six of whom were soldiers in the civil war, the speaker is the only survivor.

One object of our organization was to purchase the Lincoln residence in Springfield, collect in it mementoes of the president's early and later life, place a custodian in charge and keep it open for the visiting public. One of our number went to Washington to see Robert T. Lincoln, with his wife and child moving into the Lincoln home under the conditions we had suggested. I knew them both as schoolmates and have visited them at different times. They have both passed away. Another object of our association was to hold memorial exercises at the Lincoln tomb annually on April 15th, beginning at 22 minutes past seven o'clock in the morning, corresponding to the exact time of the president's death. These exercises consisted of an address by some speaker of national reputation reading from Mr. Lincoln's letters, speeches and messages and appropriate music. These were kept up a number of years, but gradually our little band began to disintegrate, some moved from the state, others embarked on that longer journey and finally considering that we had faithfully performed our self-imposed task, on April 14, 1887, 22

The Lincoln Guard of Honor



COL. J. F. McNEILL

Sole Surviving Member Tells Story of Attempt to Steal The Body of The Martyr President.

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The train arrived at Springfield on May 3rd, traveling nearly 1700 miles through a period of twelve days. The remains were taken to the State Capitol building, placed in state in the hall of representatives, and after the doors were opened for 24 hours a continuous stream of visitors, strangers, acquaintances, neighbors and friends filed past.

Mr. Lincoln had never visited his home city from the morning he left on February 11th, 1861, and few of the crowd that gathered at the station to bid him good-bye ever looked upon that rugged, kindly face again until opportunity was offered upon this occasion. The following morning the remains were placed in the receiving vault of the cemetery association and here the principal funeral services were observed, Bishop Simpson, of the Methodist Episcopal church, officiating. The crowds in attendance overflowed the city, and when the head of the funeral procession reached the cemetery the rear had not left the capitol building, a mile and a half away.

President Lincoln was assassinated on the night of April 14th, 1865, at Ford's Theater, Washington, D. C., and passed away on the following morning, his death being the result of the cowardly pistol shot fired from behind by John Wilkes Booth. The funeral services, held at the National Capitol, were of the most impressive character, attended by the leading citizens of this and many foreign countries.

Those who have seen the monument will recall that it faces both south and north. In the south front facing the city is located Memorial Hall, containing a large collection of data

relating to Mr. Lincoln's administration. Over the door of the hall stands the bronze statue of Mr. Lincoln, ten feet in height, looking towards the city, where he lived from 1837 to 1861. On the opposite side of the monument is the catacomb, or large receiving vault with crypts built to receive the remains of the Lincoln family.

In the summer of 1876, the Custodian of the monument, Dr. John Carroll Power, received information that a small group was forming in Chicago with the object of stealing the President's remains and holding them for ransom. He communicated with Mr. Elmer Washburn, Chicago chief of police, who detailed a detective to hunt up the squad and join them, which he did, with the result that the chief was kept informed of what was going on and he in turn kept Dr. Power posted. The conspirators selected the night of November 7th of that year, being the night of a presidential election day, to make the

attempt. Chief Washburn and some detectives came down from Chicago, met Dr. Power, and together went to the monument shortly after dark, secreting themselves in Memorial Hall. Later on it became evident that the robbers had arrived and were at work. After waiting a sufficient length of time, Mr. Washburn and his force left the hall, ran around the monument, hoping to catch the robbers red-handed at their work, but one of the number over nervous or awkward discharged his revolver, alarming the men at work in the vault, who in the darkness and confusion escaped. A number of revolver shots were exchanged but no one was injured. These men were arrested, however, ten days later in Chicago, were brought to trial and received a sentence of one year in the penitentiary.

Previous to this a large marble sarcophagus was built and placed on the floor of the catacomb directly opposite the iron rod door through which visitors could easily see the interior of the vault, the casket of the president taken from crypt No. 1 and placed in this receptacle; and on investigation it was found that the end of the sarcophagus had been pried off and the coffin drawn partly out when the robbers were interrupted. A night or two afterwards some members of the monument association and Dr. Power removed the casket from the catacomb, conveyed it around the monument to and through Memorial Hall, intending to give some secret burial, but the task proved more arduous than they had anticipated and the coffin was placed on some projecting foundation walls and covered with loose boards, they intending to return later and finish their work, and incredible as it may appear the body of our great president was permitted to remain in that insecure and undignified situation for nearly two years, about which time the remains of A. T. Stewart, former merchant prince of New York City, was stolen from his place of burial, a large ransom paid the robbers, the body was returned, and as I recall no questions asked. This badly frightened the Association people anew, and they directed Dr. Power to call to his aid such assistance as he might consider necessary, take charge of the situation and give the president's remains secure and secret burial. The Doctor selected five others, myself among the number, called us to meet

at the monument one night, explained the situation and told us what he had marked out for us to do. One remark in his little talk I still remember, to the effect that he had spent some time trying to think up some form of iron clad oath or obligation that would bind us to secrecy, finally concluding that no obligation was more binding between men of honor than their word of honor, which was given and was sufficient. Omitting details, we lowered the casket to the ground floor of the excavation for the foundation walls, and in a room that looked like it might have been arranged for the purpose, composed only of some rising walls supporting different parts of the superstructure we buried it. Mr. Robert T. Lincoln and the executive committee of the association knew what was being done, we six only knew the exact locality. We added three friends to our number and organized the Lincoln Guard of Honor. Here I might mention that in July, 1882, the widow of President Lincoln passed away and at the funeral her remains were placed in a crypt in the catacomb and Robert Lincoln, who came to Springfield to the funeral, requested that the Lincoln Guard would bury the remains of his mother by the side of his father, and the night after the funeral we complied with his request. The Guard of Honor was incorporated under the laws of Illinois, in perpetual organization, meaning that the corporation exists as long as an incorporator is living, and of those nine friends, six of whom were soldiers in the civil war, the speaker is the only survivor.

One object of our organization was to purchase the Lincoln residence in Springfield, collect in it mementoes of the president's early and later life, place a custodian in charge and keep it open for the visiting public. I went to see Robert Lincoln, who was then Secretary of War, but he did not care to part with the property. Our object, however, was accomplished by a nephew of Mrs. Lincoln, with his wife and child moving into the Lincoln home under the conditions

we had suggested. I knew them both as schoolmates and have visited them at different times. They have both passed away. Another object of our association was to hold memorial exercises at the Lincoln tomb annually on April 15th, beginning at 22 minutes past seven o'clock in the morning, corresponding to the exact time of the president's death. These exercises consisted of an address by some speaker of national reputation reading from Mr. Lincoln's letters, speeches and messages and appropriate music. These were kept up a number of years, but gradually our little band began to disintegrate, some moved from the state, others embarked on that longer journey and finally considering that we had faithfully performed our self-imposed task, on April 14, 1887, 22 years from the date of the assassination, the necessary preparations having been made, the bodies of Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln were brought back to the catacomb and turned over to the Ex. com. of the Monument Association and the Illinois state officials, and buried in a vault that had been prepared through the floor of the catacomb.

It might be of interest to note the number of times that the body of our president was disturbed. It was first placed in the receiving vault of the cemetery association; then in a temporary vault during the building of the monument; then in crypt No. 1 in the catacomb; then in the marble sarcophagus; then placed in the rear of memorial hall; then in the ground floor of the basement; then in the vault built through the catacomb floor; then in vault built outside while the monument was being rebuilt; then returned to sarcophagus; then in vault again built through floor of catacomb, and in this absolutely secure situation the public mind may rest in the conviction that these sacred remains shall rest in safety and in peace not to be again disturbed by friendly or by vandal hands, through all the coming years.

If you want to dispose of anything about the house, try a For Sale ad in the Herald.—d1

LINCOLN GUARD SPOKE IN ALBIA

Oskaloosa Rotarians Bring "Rotary Bell" to Al- bia Chapter. 2-24-25-

ALBIA IOWA UNION

Col. J. A. McNeal of Oskaloosa, only surviving member of the body-guard of President Abraham Lincoln, was in Albia last Friday evening and spoke briefly before the Albia Rotary club. The story of the activities of this Lincoln guard is a most interesting one, particularly at this season of the year when the nation is reminded of the birth, life and wonderful achievements of that great Civil war President, and Col. McNeal told most entertainingly of hitherto unknown details of that body of men. After the burial of Lincoln in the vault at Springfield, rumors became rife that an attempt was to be made to steal the body, and in order to prevent such an occurrence, a guard of nine men, one of which was Col. McNeal, was chosen to stand watch over the body of "Honest Abe." The body was moved several different times, the guard working with the utmost secrecy in order that none should know the location of the body.

All of the men who made up that body-guard have followed Lincoln to that realm beyond the grave, with the sole exception of Col. McNeal, and his visit to Albia was a most welcome treat to members of the Albia Rotary club, and the few others who had the pleasure of meeting the colonel and hearing his story of the

The occasion for Col. McNeal's visit "Lincoln Guard."

it here was the coming of the Oskaloosa Rotarians, passing on the Rotary Bell from Rotary club to Rotary club, thus creating a more intimate relationship between the members of the organization in the various cities.

Another interesting number on the program, which was furnished by the Oskaloosa Rotarians, was an address by G. W. Shockley, who spoke of his recent Mediterranean tour. Mr. Shockley told most interestingly of his trip and told of many incidents, customs and peculiarities of cities he visited in the Old World.

Following the program a social hour prevailed in which Albia Rotarians demonstrated to the Oskaloosa members of the organization the real old-fashioned Albia-style cordiality and hospitality.

The local Rotarians will go to Chariton next Friday evening where they will pass the "bell" on their brother Rotarians in Lucas county.

